How to get published in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*

At the Journal of Sociolinguistics*, we receive many more submissions than we can publish. What follows is a compilation of features which, from our experience, will maximize your chances of having a paper accepted for publication with us. While a few of the points below apply specifically to our journal, we think most of them constitute general academic good practice. We offer them, then, also in the spirit of opening up consideration of what constitutes good scholarly work, and of making the sometimes mysterious process of journal submission a little more transparent.*

1. We are essentially a **sociolinguistic** journal. We are interested in submissions which encompass both the social and the linguistic, although we are entirely open about how that should be achieved. If your article is basically linguistic but with little social address (such as one might find in some variationist or corpus work), or is basically social but with little linguistic content (such as an abstract discussion of ideologies), it is probably not for us. There are some subfields that might or might not work for this journal. For example, papers in the area of language acquisition-learning need to have a strong and explicit sociolinguistic focus, rather than a cognitive, psycholinguistic or pedagogical one. Papers in discourse or text analysis need to harness close analysis of linguistic form to some broad social question.
2. In your paper, address broad issues or questions in sociolinguistics and sociolinguistic theory. Fascinating data and specific case studies are good, but their wider interest and relevance need to be made clear. Explain why they are important, and what readers can learn from them. We think of this as the "so what" question; be sure you give us an answer to that question explicitly.
3. See that your work is based on a sufficient foundation to be convincing to a broad readership. A preliminary study, a pilot study, or a term paper is unlikely to be of adequate scale, finesse or conclusiveness for publication in a journal.
4. Make sure your paper tells a research story. A scholarly article needs a point, a thread. Present the point early, and not suddenly near the end of the article.

Your paper needs a setup which gives a rationale for what is to follow, and a structure which makes this clear throughout the article and leads naturally into the conclusion. Get your readers' attention right away, and remind them throughout what the point of the story is.

5. Use references to the literature strategically, as a way to situate yourself in the exchange you are participating in, to explain the significance of your work, or to recognize crucial contributions you are building on. Stand-alone literature review sections are not usually the best way to make your argument, nor are list-like accounts of some studies in the field. If you are following or critiquing a precedent or frame laid out in a particular text or author's work, explain why. Make sure that you are up to date with the most recent literature on your subject, and also that you acknowledge early foundational work. But don't over-reference: if your references take up more than about one sixth of the paper, there are probably too many.
6. Be methodologically and theoretically innovative. Don't just replicate the studies of your predecessors – extend and enhance them and make it clear how you have done this. Make sure you are not re-inventing theories or methods that have been established by earlier scholars. We are looking for innovative methodological and/or theoretical contributions in all papers, and not just the analysis of innovative datasets.
7. Give a clear exposition of your design and method. Cover all the basic information readers need to know about the empirical side of your study – such as when and where it was conducted, how many participants, appropriate biographical information on speakers, background on local geography or politics.
8. Justify your choice of data, ensuring it is more than anecdotal. Is it really representative or typical of the phenomenon you are discussing? Is it adequate and appropriate to warrant the generalizations you are making? A qualitative study often needs to indicate the relative prevalence of a phenomenon – and quantitative findings usually benefit from qualitative examples.
9. Make sure your data collection has met the ethical standards required by your institution, and say this in the article. Give detail in your cover letter if necessary.

10. Don't assume that readers will share background knowledge about the local context or the sociolinguistic problem you are addressing. Tell us what we need to know in order to understand the data and its broader significance. Couch references to places, times and so on appropriately for an international readership. The world does not share a single seasonal calendar, therefore 'spring' is not a meaningful time descriptor in an international journal. Nor does it have a single school system, so 'Grade 5' will mean nothing in some places, and different ages in other countries. If you use terms like 'the North-West' or 'the East Coast', make sure it is obvious where you are writing about. Clear and simple maps may be useful to show locations.
11. Go beyond the descriptive. Present analysis, not just commentary. Balance the relative weight of the components of your paper. Keep an appropriate ratio between data (such as excerpts, tables or figures) and your analysis and interpretation of it. Generally your interpretation should take up more of the paper than the data it relates to. Ensure you get to your own findings before the half-way point of the paper. Have a substantive conclusion that is worth stating.
12. Tables and figures are intended to clearly present data that a paper is covering. Figures especially are meant to clarify and illustrate, not to obfuscate. They should contain the minimum of detail needed to make their main point, and should be simple, uncluttered and still legible when published in black-and-white hard copy. Give figures and tables clear and explicit titles. If you use statistics, make them as transparent as possible for the non-specialists who are the majority of your potential readers. Explain the point of the tests you conducted. Don't clutter the actual text with the numerics of the statistical results.
13. Aim for transparent, accessible writing. Avoid looseness, repetition, and jargon. It is in your interest to have your work accessible to the greatest number of readers, including those who may not be familiar with the technical or specialist terms used in your subfield. We recognize that writing in academic English can be a challenge, and one that places an unfair burden on many authors; we do keep this in mind when we read. Nonetheless, we also have to think about reaching a wide and multilingual readership.

14. Get the mechanics of the manuscript right: read the latest version of the Author Guidelines on our journal's website before you submit. Take care with page numbering and spacing, numbering of tables and figures and bibliographic style. Format the manuscript clearly, carefully and consistently. Avoid too many endnotes. Check references. Proof-read. Don't overrun our manuscript limit of 10,000 words (minus about 100–200 words per table and figure). We allow exceptions if they are justified in a cover letter, but we find that in fact it is extremely rare to really require extra length.
15. Make sure your abstract serves as a good overview of the study and includes the main findings. Add an abstract in a language other than English if possible.
16. In your cover letter, explicitly acknowledge related articles of yours that are in progress or submitted or published or in press.
17. Finally and centrally, focus on what you have to say and how to get it across to readers who need to understand why that message is important for them and the field.

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